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How Young People Perceive Factors that Support or Prevent Understanding between Worldviews: Perspectives of Finnish Lower Secondary School Pupils

This paper investigated Finnish youth's perceptions on what supports or prevents understanding between worldviews, especially religious and non-religious ones. A survey with projective, open-ended questions was conducted about factors that enhance or disable inter-worldview dialogue among Finnish lower secondary school students ($N=563$). The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis. Abu-Nimer's developmental model of interreligious sensitivity was used as a theoretical framework, but data-driven categories were also created. First, pupils thought of reasons why somebody would wish that religions did not exist. Four categories were created: atheism, confusion about religious expressions, problems related to one's own worldview, or problems in social interaction. Some responses were aggressive or scornful. Second, pupils reflected on why somebody would be reluctant to share things about his/her faith. The most important feature addressed here was social deviance, either fear of it or its consequences or actual experiences. Third, pupils suggested ways to create a culture of peaceful dialogue. Most responses referred to changes in attitudes or different kinds of social interaction.

Keywords: inter-worldview dialogue; interreligious dialogue; interreligious sensitivity; religious education; Finland

Introduction

This article examines Finnish teenagers' presuppositions about talking about worldview issues among peers. We investigate their views on three subquestions: Why would somebody think that religions should be abolished? Why would somebody feel that she/he cannot talk about her/his religion at school? What makes inter-worldview dialogue succeed? The latter issue has been addressed in some ethnographic (e.g. Knauth 2009) and quantitative (Josza 2009b, 153) research but this article provides a wider perspective.

Leganger-Krogstad (2011) has pointed out that dialogue on religious diversity in school differs from religious dialogue among adult representatives of religious traditions. Children and young people are not necessarily strongly affiliated to certain religions or worldviews. However, they can still benefit from activities that involve interaction between worldviews. (Castelli 2012; Jackson 2014, 74; Kimanen 2016.) Also, school as a context differs from voluntary dialogue activities of e.g. non-governmental organizations. The willingness to enter dialogue and to follow certain rules cannot be taken for granted in schools. Instead, it has to be negotiated and a safe space must be created (Jackson 2014, 47–54).

Swidler (1987, 6) defines interreligious dialogue as a conversation between two or more persons the aim of which is to learn from each other, not to change the counterpart's views. In this paper, we use this goal-oriented definition of dialogue. This study deals with the question how an encounter between different worldviews could turn into a conversation that aims at or results in increased mutual understanding that helps interlocutors live peacefully together. Thus, in its most simple form, a dialogue might only consist of an initiation (question or another stimulus like a narrative) and a response. A conflict may also serve as a stimulus for dialogue if treated wisely (O'Grady 2009, 58).

Recent growth in the recognition that understanding is not only needed between religions but also between religious and non-religious people has caused a change in vocabulary. Castelli (2012) has called for a shift from religious dialogue to faith dialogue that is not exclusive to religious belief. However, we prefer the term 'worldview' because it does not imply affiliation to a tradition (cf. personal worldview, Jackson 2014, 71) and encompasses both religious and non-religious beliefs.

Julia Ipgrave (2012) has noted a difference between schools where religion is ‘normal’ among the pupils, and schools where it is ‘abnormal’. In the former contexts, relationships between pupils with different personal worldviews were not as tense as in the latter, where religious pupils experienced mocking. Ipgrave concludes that in the latter schools pupils need exercises to understand the religious life as such. In the former communities it is possible to start dialogue education directly from skills. The same gap between religious and non-religious pupils has been identified in some ethnographic (von Brömssen 2007, 152–154) and quantitative (Sjöborg 2013; Kuusisto, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2016) research. This is why we have included questions on religious and non-religious positions in this study.

In education for inter-worldview dialogue the teacher has to be aware of the presuppositions held by the pupils. The teacher should know the fears the pupils have, and how the pupils tend to explain each other’s behaviour, and subsequently be able to address the issues and bring them to open discussion. This article illuminates some presuppositions held by Finnish youth.

Interreligious Sensitivity among Finnish youth

It has been stated that one of the prerequisites for successful religious dialogue is interreligious sensitivity (see Abu-Nimer 2001, 2004). Interreligious sensitivity refers to the individual’s reactions to religious differences. A person may deny the existence of religions in his/her environment (denial), sees religious differences as a threat (defence) or discards these differences (minimization). On the other hand, a person with a more sensitive mindset accepts and respects religious differences and understands that other religions have the right to exist and to be practised (acceptance) or is even ready to experience and understand another spiritual path, at least for a brief period (adaptation). (Abu-Nimer 2004.) These concepts can be adapted to an analysis of prerequisites of

inter-worldview dialogue as well as providing an approximate outline of development to be observed.

In previous studies, pupils' interreligious sensitivity in Finnish lower secondary schools has been explored using the 'Interreligious Sensitivity Scale (IRRSS)' (Holm, Nokelainen, and Tirri 2011). The IRRSS is an operationalization of Abu-Nimer's (2001, 2004) Developmental Model of Interreligious Sensitivity which in turn is created on the basis of Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Studies have shown that most Finnish pupils are prone to accept religious differences; however, males, low-achieving pupils, those who live in rural towns and those who identify themselves as non-religious are more likely to have negative attitudes like defence and denial than their counterparts (Holm, Nokelainen, and Tirri 2014; Kuusisto et al. 2014; Kuusisto, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2016). In this study we continue to investigate Finnish pupils' views and attitudes towards religious differences by analysing the pupils' own words, which will provide in-depth knowledge about interreligious processes among Finnish pupils.

The Finnish Context

Religious education (RE) classes provide an intriguing context for this paper since Finnish pupils are entitled to classes in their own religion or in secular ethics classes if they do not have a specific religious affiliation (Sakaranaho 2013). However, parents from whatever religious or non-religious background may choose Lutheran RE for their children. Consequently, 92 percent of basic education pupils participate in Evangelical Lutheran RE, compared to 4 per cent in secular ethics instruction, and 4 per cent in the curricula of one of the smaller religious communities (e.g. 1.5% Islam, 1.4 % Orthodox) (*Koulutuksen tilastollinen vuosikirja 2014* 2014, 49; Statistics Finland 2015)., At the same time, 73.8% of the Finnish population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church,

1.1 % to the Greek Orthodox Church in Finland, 1.6% to other religions or denominations, and 23.5% merely have a census register or their affiliation is unknown (Statistics Finland 2015).

The Finnish RE system is aimed at fostering tolerance and knowledge concerning religions and worldviews, and at supporting pupils' identity negotiations. The national core curriculum includes teaching issues such as other religions and worldviews, freedom of religion, and ethics. In Lutheran RE, the past and present of the Lutheran Church is explained but pupils are not expected to adopt Lutheran beliefs. (Sakaranaho 2013). Further, the curriculum to be implemented from autumn 2016 onwards stresses dialogue skills more than previously (Finnish National Board of Education 2014).

It should also be noticed that membership of the Lutheran church does not necessarily entail religious practice or faith. Young people in particular do not consider themselves religious even though confirmation schools are an important part of Finnish youth culture: 84.2 % of all 15-year-olds participate in confirmation classes given by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (*Kirkon tilastollinen vuosikirja 2014* 2015; Kääriäinen, Niemelä, and Ketola 2005, 84, 114–122, 134–144). According to recent research it has been noticed that so-called secular Lutheranism has become a hegemonic worldview that problematizes both exclusively secular and exclusively religious worldviews (Rissanen, Kuusisto, and Kuusisto forthcoming). This also means that the forms of secular thinking are often understood as neutral and are not considered to be worldviews at all, which in turn challenges interreligious and worldview dialogues (Riitaoja and Dervin 2014).

Data and Methods

Participants

The non-probability sample ($N=563$) was gathered from five Finnish lower secondary schools in the city of Espoo, which is located in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The pupils completed an online questionnaire under the supervision of a teacher. Of the respondents, 307 (55%) were female and 251 (45%) male, whereas five pupils (1 percent) did not mention their gender. Pupils were in the seventh grade ($n=239$, 41%), eighth grade ($n=161$, 28%) or ninth grade ($n=162$, 29%), representing the age groups 13–15. Ten pupils did not mention their grade. Most of the pupils attended Lutheran RE classes ($n=509$, 90 %), a small minority of the pupils ($n=36$, 7%) studied other RE subjects, like Greek Orthodox, Catholic or Islam. Only 15 pupils (2.7%) participated in secular ethics classes, and three pupils did not answer this question.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire included background questions, survey items and open-ended questions that had a projective nature (Catterall and Ibbotson 2000). In this paper we focus on the projective questions in which the participants were given three situations related to interaction (or lack of interaction) with different worldviews in a school environment. The pupils' task was to explain why the situation had turned out as the projective story suggested. The projective questions were:

- (1) 'Your classmate says: "I do not understand why some people believe in God. It would be easier and freer to be without religions for everyone." Why do you think he/she says this? Tell us in a story what happened before that.'

- (2) Your classmate is sad and he says: “Everybody is friendly but I somehow feel that I cannot talk about my religion to anybody in this school.” Why do you think she/he say so? Tell us in a story what happened before that.
- (3) Someday these people will understand and respect each other. They will sometimes question what the other person thinks about life, future and death, but they will still stay friends. Tell us in a story what has happened and led to such positive changes.

The Analysis Process

The analysis process included two phases: first, the first author conducted an inductive content analysis (Elo and Kyngäs 2007) to create a coding frame by reading, re-reading and comparing pupils’ answers, as well as testing and modifying the frame little by little. From each answer different meanings were coded, in other words the unit of analysis was a meaningful content which could have been expressed with a word or a sentence, and all aspects of pupils’ responses were marked. Consequently, a single response could contain several units of analysis. The code names were data-driven (Schreier 2014, 176) with one exception, ‘Defence’, which was adopted from the Developmental Model of Interreligious Sensitivity and could be identified in all the three assignments (Abu-Nimer 2001). Overall, pupils’ answers were relatively short (from a few words to a few sentences).

Further, answers like ‘I don’t know’, responses which indicated that the pupil had misinterpreted the task, and blank spaces were removed from the analysis. The percentages of these cases were relatively high: 24–33 % depending on the assignment. The high proportion of non-responses may have been due to the difficulty of the assignment, or to lack of inspiration, but in some cases the omitted responses indicated scornful or indifferent attitudes towards inter-worldview dialogue.

Secondly, ten percent of the material was coded by the second author and kappa values were calculated to test the level of agreement. Codes with low kappa values (below .60) were identified, discussed and modified. The new codes were tested with another ten percent of the data. This process was repeated until the kappa value of each code was above .60, which is considered a good indicator of agreement (Cohen, 1960). Next the first author coded the whole material by using the final version of the coding frame, which is presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Results

Defensive attitudes of the respondents

One category appeared in all the assignments, namely 'Defence,' and this category contained aggressive and scornful responses. The defensive responses of all the assignments are analysed in this section together, because they did not often provide reflection on the question at hand. In this data their percentage was below 10%, which corresponds to defensive attitudes in a quantitative study on European youth's views on religious diversity (Josza 2009b, 152).

Both the vocabulary and the contents in relation to the assignment were taken into account when coding this category. Scorn was most often directed towards religious dialogue or towards the assignment: 'lol [laugh out loud]', 'God gave them [persons finally having a good dialogue] candy', 'because yolo [you only live once]'.

Both scorn and hostility were directed either towards religions altogether like 'he was the only stupid person in the school who believed in some rubbish', or towards Christianity, though somehow from an insider's perspective, like the comment 'fucking Jesus' or 'who the fuck is interested in a guy on a cloud?' Only a couple of responses mentioned other religions, e.g. 'This coward was a Muslim.' There were also some

more temperate but non-compromising declarations of atheism: ‘they still don’t understand that religions are useless’ or ‘because it [the fact that the world would be better off without religions] is true’. All these approaches are characterized by a sense of superiority that is harmful to dialogue. The findings support the perception that the gap between worldviews in Finnish school communities is deepest between the religious and non-religious worldviews (Kuusisto, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2016).

A small part of the responses ($n=5$) coded as defensive could have been labelled denial (Abu-Nimer 2004, 498) as pupils showed a lack of interest in religions: ‘don’t know not interested’, ‘I don’t care what they [people having a good dialogue] think’, ‘Nobody is interested in religion, not at least in our school’. The sense of superiority or self-sufficiency, however, links these with the scornful and hostile responses.

Reasons to Believe that Religions Should Be Abandoned Altogether

[Table 1 here]

Assignment 1 sought explanations for attitudes that are hostile towards religions. It is important to bear in mind that not all the respondents shared the view stated in the assignment, so they had to imagine the reasons. In some cases, however, the respondent’s position became clear, especially in the defensive responses that constituted a bigger proportion in this assignment than in the others. There were, however, also responses where the speaker was blamed for intolerance and ignorance. The responses can be divided into suggested *features in the speaker’s thinking* (atheism, confusion) and *previous experiences of the speaker* (problems in one’s own religion, the influence of other people).

The commonest reasons related to *thinking of the speaker* are well represented in this answer: ‘They have had a religious education class and this pupil is confused about

piousness; he/she is an atheist.’ This respondent was the only one to use the word confused, but others used words and expressions like: ‘His/her family is not religious (--). That is why he/she is so ignorant about them [religions] and thinks they are useless.’ These accounts lead to interpreting responses without explanations as *confusion*, for example ‘He/she had talked with somebody who does religious things e.g. every day.’ or ‘Before this we had an RE class in which god was talked about.’ Pupils also pointed at conflicts or oppression related to religions, and some mentioned the general backwardness or uselessness of religions, so these responses were also interpreted as forms of confusion.

Atheism was another important feature in the responses that referred to one’s thinking. This code also contains general negative stances towards religions. Sometimes the respondents implied that it was their own opinion as well, thus there is a link to the defensiveness that was described earlier. A noteworthy proportion ($n=33$) did not contain any other reasons than atheism, as though it were natural that atheists do not tolerate religions (cf. Kuusisto, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2016) or that people in general do not tolerate worldviews other than their own. Answers of this sort may also have been a simple solution for those who experienced the assignment as difficult or did not want to spend time in deeper reflection.

Some of the respondents, however, provided explanations that did not assume that the speaker was an atheist. The *problems of one’s own religion* were the most typical *experiences* that were mentioned. Sometimes problems were related to one’s ability to believe: ‘The friend has probably had a big bad thing (e.g. a close person has died) and his/her faith is shattered and he/she is angry.’ Also, short accounts like ‘something bad has happened to him/her’ were interpreted to refer to difficulties in believing. But why should a person whose faith is faltering want to abolish religions

altogether? Teenagers seem to explain why the person does not believe and assume that such persons think that nobody else should believe either.

Sometimes problems were located in RE, for example: '[he/she] has had a bad mark in RE or has had e.g. a reeeeeeally boring double class in RE.' Boredom during RE classes was interpreted as the underlying message in short accounts like 'they've had an RE class'. The logic is probably partly depicted in this response: 'She/he has realized that without religion there would be less stuff to study and one doesn't need to go to church.' It is worth noting that being an atheist and having to attend RE classes were mentioned together in only one response. The problem with the RE classes, according to the respondents, is thus primarily boredom (or possibly confusion) rather than religiousness. This could be interpreted to mean that Finnish Lutheran RE has at least succeeded in maintaining an open atmosphere although there may be problems with the methods and maintaining the pupils' interest.

Another type of *previous experience* was *the impact of other people*. This category included a wide variety of cases. The most typical ($n=27$) explanation was that the speaker followed his/her family or friends in his/her thinking. Different forms of pressure ($n=22$) were also coded here, both religious: 'His/her parents force him/her to go to church and all kinds of congregational activities'; 'In the [school] service he/she has had to sit in the front row with the group and sing and pray religious texts,' or non-religious: 'Maybe she/he has been brainwashed at home to think that believing is stupid.' Attempts to proselytize can also be counted as pressure, e.g.:

'Some extreme believers have come to the school and they have been babbling for almost an hour how great it is to be a believer. This school friend is an atheist who is annoyed by this foisting of religion and complains about it. In my view he/she is partly right.'

These examples show the sensitivity of some young people to their autonomy on

religious matters.

The impact of other people could also mean experience of conflicts ($n=21$, e.g. ‘They had talked about god and a quarrel had broken out’), or bullying because of religion ($n=19$). It is easy to understand that bad experiences of religion are linked with religion-hostile attitudes. Being bullied, however, is unlikely to cause hostility towards religion itself in a religious person. The logic here may be that if there were no religions there would be no such ground for bullying. On the other hand, these accounts may reflect the weak affiliation to religion many teenagers have – and also a fear of social deviance.

Lack of knowledge is only mentioned seven times in the responses. It came up in different categories like confusion (‘he/she does not know how it feels when a believer believes in God’), or the influence of other people (‘because she/he really does not know anything about the issue and tries to attract attention’). The former actually conveys the personal religious position of the respondent and refers to experiential knowledge instead of mere information.

Reasons to Feel that One Cannot Talk about His/Her Religion

[Table 2 here]

In contrast to the previous writing assignment, which concentrated on a non-religious view, the following assignment asked the respondents to empathize with a religious person and to think of reasons why dialogue could be difficult. The coding frame here took the form of a scale from minor to major experiences.

First, there are *personal factors* that work in the background and have little to do with the religion of the speaker. Second, there is the fact that the speaker somehow is *socially deviant* because of his/her religion. Third, the speaker feels negative *emotions*

because of his/her religion, e.g. fear, shame, or loneliness. Fourth, there is evidence that other people in his/her surroundings either have *attitudinal problems* towards religion or are not willing or able to discuss religion. Fifth, the speaker has *experienced bullying* because of his/her religion. Most of the answers, thus, circle around deviance: experience of it, shame about it, fear or experience of discrimination because of deviance, and experience of other pupils' intolerant attitudes behind the fear of or actual bullying

It is worth noting that the respondents do not report their own fear or actual discrimination situations but mention bullying or fear of discrimination as possible explanations. In fact, in a quantitative study pupils at a multicultural school did not identify religion as a ground for bullying (Ubani 2014). The references to a poor conversation culture seem to provide evidence that being religiously deviant may be awkward: 'Because generally people in Finnish primary and lower secondary schools do not have a good attitude towards Lutheran believers.' 'Because nobody else is interested.' 'He/she has noticed that nobody else talks about their religion at school, so he/she feels that he/she can't talk about it freely.' 'She/he talked with his/her friends, but when religion was brought up the conversation became more embarrassing and his/her friends faded out.'

Von Brömssen (2003, 329) has also noted a lack of interest in religions in her ethnographic study. She also speaks about 'tolerance through silence', meaning that different religions are tolerated but not considered very interesting, and discussion is avoided. Many studies have found that pupils may avoid discussion for fear of disharmony (Josza 2009a, 138; Knauth 2009, 131; Kimanen 2013, 22; Kimanen 2016; Åhs, Poulter, and Kallioniemi 2015, 12).

There were actually two types of deviance that were referred to. In about half of the responses it is not clear what the speaker's religion was. Some 40% of the pupils suggest explicitly that the speaker had a different religion from everybody else's. When the specific religion is mentioned, it is most often Islam. In some responses (explicitly in 13 cases), however, the speaker was assumed to be more religious than others in surroundings that favoured indifference towards religion. According to these contributions, not only members of minority religions but also those who have a religious identity instead of being indifferent or secular are considered socially deviant.

What Makes Dialogue Succeed?

[Table 3 here]

In order to discuss religion, most pupils mentioned that some form of *inner changes* must have occurred. Most ($n=185$) of these inner changes meant positive attitudes like tolerance, respect, interest, understanding, equality and accepting diversity. Second ($n=56$) came acquiring knowledge. Pupils identified school and RE classes as places where knowledge and respectful attitudes can be taught. Some also mentioned Lutheran confirmation camps and their secular equivalent, Prometheus camps, as venues for learning to understand diversity. Becoming more mature ($n=24$) was also one inner change proposed by the respondents. It can be observed here that pupils agree with Abu-Nimer's conception (2001) that moving from defence and denial towards acceptance is one of the key prerequisites for successful dialogue.

Another common suggestion for inner changes also reflected a shift towards acceptance. This subcategory ($n=38$) included ideas like 'They have realized that religion does not mean so much' or 'They have realized that they can be friends even if they belong to different religions' or 'The persons met during school lunch and noticed

that they have much in common. Like hobbies, favourite TV series and books.’ At first sight it seems that religion is underrated in these responses. However, they would seem instead to underrate the need to dislike people with different beliefs. Although appreciating diversity is the goal, recognizing a shared humanity is its necessary prerequisite (Bennett 1993).

Another important explanation provided by the pupils was *change in social relations*. For instance: ‘They were forced to do something together at work, and then they got to know each other and realized that they are similar to everybody else.’ ‘They have discussed religion.’ ‘They have become good friends?’ Some of these have a link with the ideas of shared humanity and respecting diversity. The emphasis on friendship and casual interaction can be summed up as the view that successful religious dialogue requires some personal relationship between the parties.

As to references to discussion between supporters of different worldviews, it may look like circular thinking to maintain that dialogue is enabled by having dialogue. However, it is plausible to argue that even a conflict may turn into a dialogue if the causes of the dispute are addressed (O’Grady 2009, 58) and if the answers shake presuppositions. Thus discussion can be understood as a path to trust and a deeper exchange of ideas.

Three respondents explained that dialogue would be enabled if the religious conflicts in the world came to an end. It is possible that this meant the same as never for these respondents, but not necessarily. If it did, these responses could also be coded in the category *impossibility of dialogue*.

Within the category *impossibility of dialogue* some maintained that the religious individual should abandon his/her religion and or that they both should adopt the same faith. Some suggested that they had learnt to avoid people who are incapable of

dialogue and some simply stated that peaceful interaction between inter-worldviews was impossible. The *defensive* responses were largely based upon the same position, but they used insulting language when they doubted the possibility. These categories were, however, very small.

The responses of Finnish youths correspond to a quantitative study where European teenagers agreed that knowing about each other's religion helped one to live together in peace. Also doing something together was believed to help, but the views diverged on restricting the role of religion in society and keeping one's own religion in private. (Josza 2009b, 153.)

Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined lower secondary school pupils' ($N=563$) perceptions on religious dialogue by investigating with projective questions what hinders religious dialogue and what are the prerequisites for successful dialogue. The results showed that fear of social deviance was seen to be the main obstacle for discussing or revealing personal worldviews. The attitudinal climate in schools was also regarded as problematic. Some pupils' answers reflected indifferent and hostile attitudes towards religious dialogue, a trend which has also been found in other studies on Finnish lower secondary school students (Holm, Nokelainen, and Tirri, 2014; Kuusisto et al. 2014; Kuusisto, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2016).

Even though the majority of pupils' answers did not reveal strong emotions, consciously religious and non-religious young people seemed to be the most concerned with questions relating to religion, the former with positive feelings and the latter with negative feelings. Further, it was precisely these negative attitudes, either openly or implicitly expressed, that were feared most in pupils' projective answers. The results also indicate that the pupils' recognition of worldviews whether they are religious or

non-religious needs to be educated to increase self-understanding and mutual respect (e.g. Riitaoja and Derwin 2014; Rissanen, Kuusisto, and Kuusisto forthcoming).

The results are in line with Abu-Nimer's stage model of interreligious sensitivity. There were responses that reflected negative perceptions on inter-worldview dialogue, especially defence or denial. Those answers that expressed belief in the possibility of peaceful dialogue and associated it with maturity and positive attitudes represented stronger inter-religious sensitivity. Further, youths' idea of shared humanity (Bennett 1993) provided an insight into what kind of reasoning in pupils' views is necessary in order to build bridges of friendship between individuals with different worldviews. Thus, the importance of interpersonal relationships was highlighted in pupils' answers.

However, pupils' expressions of confusion about religions seem to provide an aspect that is lacking in Abu-Nimer's model. The Finnish teenagers' answers suggested that some young people are simply perplexed by some features, like conflicts related to religion, and the diversity or peculiarity of beliefs and practices. In assignment one, confusion was used as a tool to explain defensive attitudes. This raises the question whether confusion can exist on its own right, without hostility.

Abu-Nimer's model was developed for interreligious training programmes to increase participants' awareness of possible horizons (Abu-Nimer 2001, 697). Thus, it does not implicate the constancy of stages. The pupils attributed attitudes to specific situations and personal life histories, which could indicate that the outcomes of dialogue education should probably be seen as situational and not permanent. If a person is accustomed to accepting a certain diversity of worldviews in a certain field he/she does not necessarily accept new, perhaps more confusing or more different beliefs or practices that he/she faces in other circumstances.

This study has some limitations. First, there is the problem of the interpretation of responses to projective assignments (Catterall and Ibbotson 2000). The responses do not indicate students' actual attitudes, but how they interpret certain behaviour. However, the projective technique caught a fair amount of reflection on a topic like inter-worldview dialogue that the pupils probably had little conscious experience of. Another limitation is related to the length and specificity of the responses. Even the projective approach could not avoid a vast number of very short responses. Interpretations of the more extensive responses were consequently utilized to help the reading of the short ones. This interpretative process required deep discussions between the authors and calculations of kappa values to verify the validity of the analysis. Finally, it should be noted that almost a third of the responses had to be removed from the data because pupils had either not answered at all or they had not produced understandable replies. Nevertheless, the number of qualitative answers was relatively high (over 400 per assignment) and this projective survey provided a wide range of possible explanations to the situations presented.

The views of the pupils cannot be taken as direct instructions for dialogue education. This study only maps their preunderstandings. There are, however, some implications to the practice. Because so many pupils are quite straightforward in their thinking that if people have certain beliefs they do not tolerate others, they might benefit from learning about real-life examples of mutual care between different faiths. The pupils' reflection on the influence of situations and previous experiences could be applied to dialogue education in the form of the use of narratives and life histories. Because pupils are so sensitive to deviance, dialogue education should take steps to establish trust among the pupil group before pupils are asked to share their worldviews. It may also be a good idea to tackle the possible confusion of pupils when facing

religious diversity. This means trying to understand religiosity as such, and controversial issues specifically, the latter naturally only after some understanding about religiosity has been reached.

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Table 1 Codes of Assignment 1

Code	Thinking		Experiences		Defence	Total number of respondents
	Atheism	Confusion	Problems in one's own religion	Influence of other people		
N	90	146	128	93	31	424
%	21.23 %	34.43 %	30.19 %	21.93 %	7.31 %	

Table 2 Codes of Assignment 2

Code	Personal factors	Deviance	Emotions (e.g. fear, shame)	Attitudinal climate	Bullying	Defence	Total number of respondents
N	28	132	144	142	124	14	429
%	6.53 %	30.77 %	33.57 %	33.10 %	28.90 %	3.26 %	

Table 3 Codes of Assignment 3

Code	Inner changes	Change in social relations	Impossibility of Dialogue	Defence	Total number of respondents
N	266	148	20	21	376
%	70.74 %	39.36 %	5.32 %	5.59 %	